

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Ray Burnett
Centerville, IA
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Interviewers –DNR Representatives; Ray and Nancy Downing

CCC enrollee Ray Burnett's voice will be in bold print

Ray: I was in four different camps. Back in those days my folks did not have enough money to eat on, so of course we had to send \$25 of that \$30 home. Well the last time I was in was 1939.

DNR: My Dad was a LEM at Lake Wapello. He and a lot of boys planted tree and put up fences.

Ray: Well, we did some of that out in Eldora we sawed for a dam or a lake. Moved the stakes down, we did just about everything.

DNR: When I came here in 1950, I got a place north out of town here and it was 40 acres and I was walking around and over it and found a little dam and up on the hillside it was kind of steep and they had taken Locust trees and made a terrace, and I said something to the neighbor about it. And he said "Oh yes, that was CCC work."

Ray: They had a 100 acre nursery, you go across the river from Keosauqua first place you turn left and go back down there and all of that was 100 acres there and that was all nurseries. We put trees like locust and bundled about this much around. Then we would ship them out to Virginia or whatever, we did part of that.

DNR: How long have you been here?

Ray: Oh, I don't know less that a year or something, I use to live down at Moulton a while. Stayed in Colorado for 6 years then I moved back.

DNR: So you lived in Moulton?

Ray: I had a place out there, the old Kirby place, you know that? Then I sold that and bought this one, moved it out there. And she didn't like it so we moved down here.

DNR: First I need to ask you if can take your picture.

Ray: No, you will break the camera.

DNR: You' won't break my camera..... (Tape stops momentarily.)

Ray: When I got out the last time that was in 1939. I went up there a couple of years ago to see what was still there and of course where the camp was at it was all grown up to trees and they have a golf course right across the road from here.

DNR: Same with my Army camps, I went back too.

Ray: Anyway, they signed me up so I could get in. I went in June of 36, weight 106 lbs, 16 years old, and I sent money home for my folks to live on. I worked for them from 38 to 39. I had a wreck right on top of that main hill in a 32 Chevy. There was a pig coming around the corner, a whole load of people in the car, on the outside of the road which should have been on the inside. I either had to hit them or the great big boulders up there on the top, well then my car went straight across the road. And of course about a hundred feet on one side and 140 feet down on the other side and that car stayed on the road. When it came back around it had popped out the windshield, cut my artery right here behind my fingers. That is all that it did for me. I figured all I could do was hit that rock or hit those people on my side of the road. So I will never forget that.

DNR: Could I have you sign this.

Ray: Well just as long as it doesn't tie me down to anything.

DNR: No, no, what it does it gives them the right to use your recording.

Ray: I don't go by my full name, I just sign everything Ray. My name is Archie Raymond.

DNR: Sure.

Ray: Hope nobody will copy my righting.

DNR: Thank you, I appreciate you signing that.

Ray: How long are we going to do this?

DNR: With you or with everybody?

Ray: Well, I have a friend that is in the hospital and I would like to go see her.

DNR: We can do part of it today and another park tomorrow. Anyway you want to do it, it is up to you. That friend wouldn't happen to be related to Harlan McIntire would she?

Ray: No, it Olli Howard's, wife.

DNR: I talked to a fellow earlier today named Harlan McIntire who said he would like to do this, but his wife just had a heart attack and was in the hospital. He lives out here in Centerville.

Ray: I had a bypass twice in 81 and in 93 and I had a stint put in about 5 months ago.

DNR: For the benefit of the recording tell them your name.

Ray: Ray Burnett

DNR: Well, you live in Centerville now if they want to contact you can they have your telephone number?

Ray: Yah I suppose.

DNR: What was your home town?

Ray: It was Downing, MO.

DNR: Know how old were when you first went to the CCC camp?

Ray: 16 said I was 17, but I was only 16.

DNR: You fudged a little bit.

Ray: Well my folks didn't have anything to eat on, so I didn't have any choice.

DNR: You were just out of school at that time.

Ray: Just got out of the eighth grade and went to work on a farm it was suppose to be for three months at \$40.00. Then I decided to go into the CCC in June of 36.

DNR: Was there any specific reason that you decided to join the CCC's.

Ray: I did it because my folks didn't have anything to live on.

DNR: Oh I can remember that. On your first assignment what camp were you assigned to?

Ray: At Keosauqua, 3724.

DNR: At Lacey Keosauqua? And then did you let your term expire or did you just transfer.

Ray: No, I stayed the whole year from June to July. You had to sign up for a whole year, June to July. You have to sign up for a whole year, I stayed until July. My folks lived up in a little town, Winchester up by Birmingham at that time. And I walked all the way up from Keosauqua where they lived. About 12 miles when I wanted to go home, several times, it was 2 hours and 45 minutes and I was home. And I got out in July of 37. I can't remember how long I was out but then I went back in again in 38. Signed up in Keosauqua but they took me to Fairfield, had a brother go in and then they took us to Eldora, and that is where we put sod on the dams and built fence and that kind of stuff. I worked in the nursery too, bundling up those trees. They wanted volunteers so a buddy of mine and I volunteered to put a million trees in a box car on a week-end. They were little saplings that were bundled and we put them in a box car on a Saturday and a Sunday.

DNR: On your second hitch how long you were in Anamosa or I am sorry, Eldora?

Ray: I really can't remember what we did there. When I went in and signed up at Keosauqua and from there they took us to Fairfield, we didn't stay there very long. Then they took us to Eldora one evening. Then we had to go to the supply room and get our beds and take them and put them in the barracks and everything like that. But I can't remember when I went in there. I think it had to be the last part of 37 or 38. And I was there probably pretty close to a year, I can't remember but I know you had to sign up for a year, so I was probably pretty close to a year there. And then the next time I went to Lamont at Backbone State Park, up by Strawberry Point and Manchester.

DNR: So that was your third turn that you signed up? Were you in for a year at that time?

Ray: Yes, I am pretty sure I was, I can't remember the dates but anyway, I am pretty sure I was.

DNR: Lets back up to Keosauqua, what all types of work did you do there?

Ray: I worked in the nursery.

DNR: That was the main thing that you did?

Ray: Yes, that was the main thing that we did there. Well, we did work in the park in Keosauqua. See that was actually a dirt road, so we put gravel on that. I worked a little bit with the guys setting some dynamite when we were working with that rock. We had to put it in a crusher up on the bank and we had to drive up the creek to get down below and get the rock out.

DNR: That was right in the park wasn't it?

Ray: Just a drop over that hill, before you go through the main part of the park. And then I helped set dynamite in there, the guy was LEM that I was working with. He was an older man and I worked with him doing that, then they put that rock on the road. My job was to go out there and stop and start the trucks and when he got started I would trip the thing for him to let his rock out, that and clean up.

DNR: Here is a 16 year old signing up for a new experience and you go off to camp.

Ray: And I had never been away from home.

DNR: What was your first days experience and excitement, what surprised you the most?

Ray: Like I said I had never been away from home, so it was all a surprise. But anyway, we had about 200 guys there counting officers and all, had an Army Caption that was over us.

DNR: Were you issued clothing that first day?

Ray: They tried to fit us, but all of us didn't fit.

DNR: Did you have to get a haircut like you did in the service or did they let you keep your hair the way that you wanted it?

Ray: Well, I don't remember if hair was a very big deal back then, I don't remember, I have always wore my hair pretty short. But I don't think anything was mentioned, they didn't wear long hair like they do now.

DNR: Your clothing and your personal items, there wasn't any kind of special equipment or anything?

Ray: Well, you had to have a foot locker kept at the end of your bed. We kept our clothes in that.

DNR: Did they give you and toiletries any soap or anything or did you have to bring your own?

Ray: They might have give us some to start with, but then we had to buy them we had a canteen where we went and bought our stuff. At that time cigarettes were 10 cents a package.

DNR: Were you allowed to bring any personal items with you, anything that was special to you that they would let you keep at the camp?

Ray: Not really, everything we kept, we kept in the foot locker, the army issue clothes, and we would hang them.

DNR: But you didn't bring anything with you that they didn't allow you to keep?

Ray: No.

DNR: You had barracks there, so were that your first quarters were staying in a barracks, and is that right? That was at Lacey at Keosauqua?

Ray: Yes, up by the railroads tracks going north and then first road turn west and the camp was up that way.

DNR: So it is about where the fairground is now.

Ray: I don't know where the fairgrounds is, but when you go out of Keosauqua, going north to Fairview, where the hospital is, turn the other direction, right back up there about two or three blocks right there.

DNR: What did you do, did they line you up like they do in the Army?

Ray: Same thing as you do in the Army, you had the same thing. We had to get up for revelry all that good stuff, they would turn the lights out at night at 10:00 o'clock and you had to be in bed by 11:00 o'clock. Just like the Army, but I wasn't in the Army, they wouldn't take me. I couldn't pass.

DNR: They didn't ask you if you had a buddy that you wanted to bunk next to or anything? They just said this is your bunk.

Ray: Well, we had a barracks leader and he pretty much let the guys chose, first come first serve. There was a little Mexican guy that was my barracks leader, real nice guy.

DNR: When you got your clothing is that when you got your bedding?

Ray: Yes, we got it all at the same time, yah you had to go in and get your bed and put your mattress on it and make it up and if you didn't have the sheets on tight the Captain would come in and tell you to tighten it up.

DNR: Did he bounce a quarter on it?

Ray: He didn't do that but he could see if it was tight.

DNR: Did I hear you say you went in with a buddy of yours?

Ray: No, my half brother and I went in the years of 38 and 39. But, we were at Backbone State Park at the time.

DNR: Would there be a chance to remember when you went to Lacey who your bunk buddies were, who was the guy next to you or?

Ray: No, I can't recall very many of the names, the first kids name was Kirkwood Montgomery, and another one was Simpson, Charlie Simpson, and 1st Sergeant. And Montgomery first name was Caption Kirk.

DNR: Coming into a camp like that and having people that you never met before and everything, sleeping across the isles, did you all get along pretty good?

Ray: Oh yah the barracks leader was a pretty rough guy if you would get out of line. He would straighten things out, but he was a nice guy and we didn't have any trouble. I got in one fight with a guy a lot bigger than me and he wasn't to sharp and a lot of them wanted to see a fight so I came out around a door and there he was, he out weight me by 70 or 80 lbs probably, started to give me a bad time and when he got through he wasn't looking good. I wasn't a very big guy, but I just

jumped up on him and hit him on both sides of his face like that and he started crying and left.

DNR: Sounds like you took care of yourself.

Ray: I did.

DNR: How was it different from camp than from home so far as the meals and so forth?

Ray: Well, one time in Keosauqua we worked in a Nursery and we came in at noon and they would serve us minced ham and pork and beans and about a week or so we decided that was enough of that so we got up a petition, to stop that. So then one day we went in at noon of course the cook and the guy that was over the supply sergeant and we decided we weren't going to eat and the sergeant came out and started giving us a bad time and said your going back to work if you eat or not. I said, Well, I can do that, because we aren't going to eat that," and we all went back to work.

We all got a petition, saying we weren't going to eat that and they took it down to the mess sergeant to change his mind and find us something to eat. But they deserved it. Minced ham and pork and bean are ok, but after a while it got old. And that was about all we were getting.

DNR: But did they have someone other than the boys that was doing the cooking?

Ray: They had two cooks and they had a I guess they called him a mess sergeant, he was the one that bought the groceries and they kept them in a place where you couldn't get into them.

DNR: What was is like when the holidays came along, like a Thanksgiving or Xmas, did they have a special meal?

Ray: I don't remember anything about the Xmas or the holiday or anything like that. I know that every time I had a chance I went home. Like I said I walked that 12 miles in 2 hours and 45 minutes, which it is quite a deal.

DNR: Yes especially in the winter time.

Ray: My folks got a car some time later and they would come and got me sometimes.

DNR: When it was payday, was it at the end of the month or what?

Ray: If I was right, it was either at the end of the month or first of the month.

DNR: And you were paid how much?

Ray: \$30.00 bucks, we were really paid \$5 and \$25 of that went home, we didn't see that.

DNR: You were really paid \$30.00, but \$25 had to go to your parents.

Ray: That is right.

DNR: I bet that was a big help to them.

Ray: It was they didn't have anything, actually when they did that, the government gave them a loan to go farming with because there wasn't any jobs. So they were trying to make it work, I don't know, I think they had two horses and probably 3 cows and the landlord had some chickens there. And that is all they had. They didn't have a farm so they had to buy the feed for them too. At that time they let the VA guys work out for hay or corn or whatever, they wouldn't let my Step Dad do that and we had a neighbor that had plenty of money and he got to work all he wanted too. So they had to live on that \$25.00 and buy the stuff they needed. My mother was an exceptional person; nobody else in this world could have done that.

DNR: What were your regular days off? Was it Saturdays and Sundays?

Ray: We really didn't have a day off, yes that is the days we got off and if I could go home I would leave Friday night and come back Sunday afternoon.

DNR: What would you do if you couldn't go home?

Ray: Stay there.

DNR: What would you do to occupy yourself?

Ray: Oh, read a little bit, we had a pool table we would play pool and I got pretty good at it, cause part of the camp went downtown on Friday and Saturday nights. I did my practicing and I got pretty good at it. I even beat the first Sergeant. Caption Kirk use to tell me how good they were. That is how I got acquainted with them; they didn't beat me very much.

DNR: So you were in camp on Sunday, did you go to church?

Ray: Could have but I didn't at that time, but you could have.

DNR: In other words they did have the services there?

Ray: Unless you were on KP which you would be working in the kitchen, you were free to do what you wanted to do.

DNR: Did they have church at the camp or would you have to go to town?

Ray: I don't remember having church there, they did have some meeting a time or two. I don't believe they had a preacher, but they did have a meeting or two, I am sure of that. But they would go downtown to go to church.

DNR: Did they have a pretty good variety of sports? Could you play basketball or baseball?

Ray: I don't remember doing any of that, at all, I don't remember that at all. I didn't play.

DNR: Was that pretty much the same in all three camps?

Ray: That is a long time back. I would really have to think back.

DNR: I remember at Lake Wapello the boys had a ball team.

Ray: I don't remember.

DNR: Would it help you if we made this interview about Keosauqua and came back again and do the other one.

Ray: What I did in Keosauqua, I can almost remember all of that, I was there all year. I can't even remember exactly when I went into camp the next time. I know I signed up in Keosauqua and went to Fairview and only spent a couple days there and then I was sent to Eldora. When I was in Fairview, it was my home town anyway I use to live in Fairview. But, I don't remember much about that, but in Keosauqua, I had never been away from home so I remember every bit of that. Still do, most of it.

DNR: You don't recall in any of the camps of playing baseball or basketball or anything like that? Something is bound to happen occasionally and I think you mentioned it when you had a conflict with someone that you don't see things the way you do.

Ray: Usually if you got in a fight you got in trouble with the authorities a little bit too. But I only got into a scrap twice, both in Keosauqua and the first guy outweighed me by 70 or 80lbs maybe more than that and was a lot taller and everything, and I made him cry and he walked away crying. And the next time I was coming in from the nursery and I called him a Mexican, he wasn't a white man like me, and there was only one seat left and I went down and sat down in that seat, he decided he wanted it and I said take it, he hit me in the mouth and I came up out of that seat he took it, well all of the rest of the guys in that truck wouldn't let me back to him or I would have changed his mind so I had to stand up.

DNR: Most of your altercations weren't at Lacey they were at this camp?

Ray: No, I don't remember too much about any other problems in the other camps. I had a couple of friends that were Mexican boys that were from Fort Madison in the camp with me. One of them got killed in the service, anyway we ran around together and I had a car, wasn't suppose to have a car, wasn't suppose to own one even. Parked it down the road in a farm house someplace and just walk to camp.

DNR: If you and one of the other boys got in a hassle and there were some conflicts in the military system was there any kind of punishment, were you assigned to KP or something like that?

Ray: This one Mexican friend of mine boy got in a fight with a guy a lot bigger than him and they didn't get along very good. He kept telling him he didn't want any trouble and he wanted him to come out back. Anyway he got raising so much trouble he went out there and worked the guy over pretty good, he didn't ask for anymore, but anyway they were easy to get along with, most everybody was.

DNR: Was KP the most serious thing that could happen to you?

Ray: Well, they had a lot of things that you could do. When I was back in 39 at Backbone State Park I was the supply sergeant's helper so I was in with him a lot of the time, he was a good buddy of mine anyway. But my job was to hand the clothes out when the got bad and needed replaced or whatever and then I would have to listen to his stupid stories he went on with.

DNR: I understand that at least in some of the camps if you quite hadn't finished high school they had a deal where you could take classes.

Ray: Yes, they had a deal where you could take classes. I took typing and learned where all of the keys were at, and that was as far as I got, but they did have that in Keosauqua. I don't remember the other camps, but in Keosauqua they had several things that you could do that outside people would come in and teach them.

DNR: That apparently was part of every program at every camp because I have read that they did that.

Ray: I don't remember in the other camps, but I know Keosauqua did, I know that cause I signed up for typing and I could have signed up for more stuff but that is all I signed up for.

DNR: You said they brought in outside people to teach, were they military or were they civilian?

Ray: No they were civilians. You said they were LEM, they were older people. There was a LEM that ran the dynamite bit and another one run a bulldozer at the beach at Keosauqua, the lake we built that. The camp before us built the dam but we built the beach and went down below and shoveled rock down onto a flatbed truck down there and they built that up with a bulldozer, with it. Of course the LEM did that.

DNR: Now if they hired these LEM's or these outside teachers, did they go hold their classes in this dining room or where did you go?

Ray: Well, that is what we did when we were in typing class, I don't remember any certain time that they did that. I think the people planned around the time that they wanted to do it. But they did come in. These LEMs weren't signed up for a year like the guys were.

DNR: Now at Lacey Keosauqua, was most of the work a part of the park there, you talk about the nursery, as you grew trees (leaks) and you shipped them around to different places and they put gravel roads in the total park, did they build any buildings?

Ray: They built the shelters in the park, the camp that was at Keosauqua first, they built that dam and they built most of those shelters in the park.

DNR: Most of that was done then before you got to the buildings, that and the dam and that? Didn't gravel it did they?

Ray: Well, they put more onto the camp at first, built most of the shelters there. When you go into the park from Keosauqua and start down the hill, if you turn left, turn this way and this way. We dynamited the rock out and there was more down there, we had to drive right off into the creek and back to the street to get the rock out.

DNR: They just blasted it out and they had the crusher right there?

Ray: Yah, they had the crusher right there on top and then the truck would drive through the creek and just brought it right back to the top and brought it right out.

DNR: So you were the shovelers so to speak?

Ray: Well, no, I just pulled the trip on the gravel trucks when they started going with it and then usually when they stopped or started or paused to spread it out and then the next truck would come and I would do the same thing, I did that quite a bit. And I helped set dynamite.

DNR: So when you went to the other two camps what was your jobs there?

Ray: In Eldora, like I said they built dams before we went out there and then we put sod on them and drove stakes into it to hold it onto the dam.

DNR: Was that on private property?

Ray: Yes, and then we helped build some fence.

DNR: Then at Eldora it seemed like the main cause was erosion control and agricultural programs.

Ray: Well, that is about all that I did, they had other things they did. They raised some quail and bunch of them then take them out and turn them loose. We didn't get into much of that but I did go out a little bit. They had certain guys that did that, they had a lot of guys that turned quails loose.

DNR: Then your last camp?

Ray: That was at Lamont Backbone State Park.

DNR: Is that where you worked with the supply sergeant?

Ray: Yes.

DNR: Was that kind of your favorite job of all three camps?

Ray: Well, I didn't have to work. The sergeant that was there he did the paperwork and issued the clothes out and stuff like that.

DNR: Well other than your typing classes, was there anything special that they taught you to do other than general knowledge of growing tree seedlings and that?

Ray: I just remember about taking care of the trees, taking them out and planting them. Then we volunteered to fill that boxcar with black locust.

DNR: The DNR planted a lot of black locust.

Ray: See, that nursery was a hundred acres. Now I don't know who got it ready to plant, but I was there to take the trees out and start to get them ready, bundled them and then shipped them out. I have a suspicion that there was a farm house there pretty close with equipment and helped us get the ground ready, as far as I know the camp didn't have any equipment to do that with.

DNR: In training on the nursery maintenance and all of these jobs that you were assigned to was it generally a LEM or somebody that showed you how to do it?

Ray: It was always a LEM almost all of the time. Most of the time there was a group here and a group there. Most of the LEM were 17 and 18 and two of them were 55 and 60 years old, I know that.

DNR: Other than working for the LEMs at your job during the day, didn't you have a little military discipline and things that you had to do?

Ray: Yah, you got down and waxed the floors with a chunk of wax about this big, and we would have to clean the floor and it was rough and we would wax it.

DNR: In your camp, who were the leaders?

Ray: You would answer to the first sergeant, but the caption would tell you what to do. I use to know his name but I can't remember his name, I know Charlie Simpson was the First Sergeant, I remember that. I got more out of it, when I was in Keosauqua, I was never away from home so I didn't really know what life like, that

was all about but anyway we went through things just like the Army did, except we didn't carry a gun.

DNR: The first Sergeant and the Captain and these people that you were responsible to, have any problems with them or were they pretty understanding?

Ray: Well, they run the place we just listened. (Laughter)

DNR: Actually you got along with them pretty good?

Ray: Yah, pretty much, there was a guy that shined officer's boots and we'd called him the dog catcher and he went to, I believe, to Des Moines one time and got robbed up there.

DNR: Was that one of the boys?

Ray: Well it was his job to dude up the officers.

DNR: Well, I see.

DNR: Now you slept in the barracks and you had to get up in the morning at a certain time.

Ray: And besides that, you didn't stand around, they didn't give you very much time to get your bed in order and get out on the line.

DNR: And then when you got out in the line, was that when you got your work assignments for the day?

Ray: Usually when we went out on the line, we would eat breakfast and I don't remember how it went after that. The guys in charge I suppose got the orders and we just did what they told us to.

DNR: Well most of the time did you know today what you would be doing tomorrow; you didn't get your work assignment everyday?

Ray: We didn't get to choose what we did, they just took so many guys to this job and so many guys to that job.

DNR: Don't let us keep you if you want to go up to the hospital.

DNR: What types of equipment, I know you said you tripped the lever on the gravel boxes, but were there any kind of equipment that you ran or had to be taught to run or at any of the camps.

Ray: No, I don't remember.

DNR: So they didn't make a tractor operator or a truck driver out of you.

Ray: They had guys that could drive like the supply Sergeant, he was a truck driver. There were guys in the camp that drove the truck most of the time.

DNR: When you were out on job, like when you were graveling the roads and if you had to have a shovel or a rake how did you get those, did you have to go to supplies to get those?

Ray: I know I had a shovel but I don't remember how I got the shovel, but I assumed they had a special room for groceries and they would bring them in by truck.

DNR: Was there anybody that you worked with regularly that you considered a good close friend?

Ray: There was a baker in Keosauqua, I would go up and be with him in the evening and we would bake like 50 pies and we got through we would sit down and eat one of them when we finished.

DNR: That would be a nice reward.

Ray: He was a good buddy of mine and the Sergeant would come around and make sure everybody was in bed. Well, he knew what I was doing and he would sit there and eat a pie with us when we were through.

DNR: Well now the baker, were there any other people that were especially buddies with you?

Ray: Well, Charlie Simpson, First Sergeant, me and him were pretty good friends. He had a brother and I got acquainted with both of them. He pretty much took me under his wing. He was bigger than me and older than me. He was about 6 foot tall and 178 lbs, a pretty nice guy.

DNR: After you got out of the camp have you maintained contact with any of those buddies?

Ray: I had a friend down here, Virgil Gage down by Bloomfield and I never heard any more from him. When I got out of camp in 39 I went to work on a farm north and west of Fairfield and milked 14 to 18 cows by hand.

DNR: Did you have the same kind of problems that some of the young guys did when they went into the Army, did the city boys and the country boys kind of separate?

Ray: No, I didn't see much as I would call them a click. We were all in there to do the same thing.

DNR: Did the CCC boys get along with the city boys that were living in Keosauqua?

Ray: Well, if they gave us a bad time, they had the whole camp to mess with. In Eldora we went through one of them. A car load of guys came in to town one night and got them selves in trouble. One of them medicine shows came around and we went to it, I guess they come to get a hold of me. Well, there was a whole bunch of us marching up the street. There was a car parked on the side there and there were about 6 guys in it and they mouthed off a little bit and we almost tipped that car over. We just rocked it back and forth, they shut there mouths and asked us not

tear the car up. But they left town and didn't come back. The guys pretty much hung together.

DNR: In a camp like that where there are two or three hundred boys was there any of the Hispanics or African Americans or the Native Americans that kind of grouped up or hung out together?

Ray: Not a lot, but there was two Mexicans boys that were good friends of ours, they were from Fort Madison cause we were from over by Dallas at that time. We were pretty good buddies and hung out a lot together I guess. I don't think we had too much trouble going on. It pretty much was all of the boys' first experience and time out on a job and we considered it a job when we had a LEM to teach us and the CCC younger guys in the camp.

DNR: So you don't recall any of those clicks where the supervisor had trouble?

Ray: We didn't have any trouble but we could handle it by ourselves, but we didn't have any trouble. If we did have any trouble there would have had to been more than one of them because if 4 of us get together they wouldn't give us any trouble.

DNR: There wasn't other than the typing any other specific skills that you were into?

Ray: Well, I do know when we put that sod on that dam or lake or pond or whatever you want to call it, I had never seen that done before, they rolled that sod up and took it out there and drove wooden pegs in it to hold it down in the ground. I didn't get in on building any fences at the time, but they did build some fences. For farmers, actually in Eldora is what most generally took place was working different jobs for farmers.

DNR: You were getting some experience in regards to landscaping and that kind of thing that you might use later on.

Ray: That one deal was enough for me, I didn't care for laying sod, but I learned how they did it. We went there for mainly for one purpose and that was to get the money. We didn't care much for what we did, you know? I suppose like most

people to a certain extent what we gripped about wasn't really that bad either after I got out of there.

DNR: Do you recall other than your car wreck, was there many injuries or anyone hurt?

Ray: They took me into town and drilled out between my two front teeth. I had one that was giving me trouble and instead of drilling he was a filling. I had to have them pulled later.

DNR: If someone fell and broke an arm or something, did they have a first aid station or how did they take care of it?

Ray: Well, they had a hospital for the camp, I was never in it, but if you had your arm broke I don't think they could have fixed it. But if you had minor stuff they took care of.

DNR: There wasn't any measles epidemic or disease epidemic in the camps when you were there in the camps?

Ray: I don't remember that, no. I know they lined you up every now and then in those barracks and make you take all of your clothes off and the Captain goes through, I know that.

DNR: What about in your living conditions, did you have any trouble with mice or rats or mosquitoes or anything like that was particularly offensive to you?

Ray: I don't remember anything about that.

DNR: While you were in the camp did you ever go outside the camp and do any work other than what you were required to do as a CCC person?

Ray: We use to walk over to Strawberry Point that was about 9 miles at night and walk back. Sometimes they would take us by truck over to Oelwein.

DNR: I heard occasionally one of the CCC boys would maybe take a side job with one of the farmers, help him put up hay or something.

Ray: I don't think so, none of the camp members did. If they went out there it was to build fence and lay sod during the day.

DNR: Outside the camp, was there social activities other than chasing a few girls anything that you could do?

**Ray: I suppose you could do what you wanted to do, I got drunk one night.
(Laughter)**

DNR: Was it in the camp or out side?

Ray: Well it was out side, we went over to Manchester with my friend Virgil who lived down in Bloomfield. I said to him "Virgil I want you to stay sober tonight, because these guys come in on the wee hours of the morning and upset the beds and make a lot of noise and wake us all up. So I thought I would see if they really didn't know what they were doing or they did. So I went out and got drunk and couldn't walk back to camp only if they held me up. I went in and sat on my bed, took off my clothes and went to bed and when I got up in the morning I stood up on my bed and I was probably the smallest guy there and I said everyone of you guys listen to what I am telling you, this is the way it is, I knew what I was doing, I didn't bother you, I don't want anymore of that. I couldn't hardly walk, I had no intention of doing that, but when they would go by me and wake me up, and I thought they knew what they were doing they just didn't care. So when I got drunk I really just didn't care, I went to the roller skating rink and was flirting with all of the girls and almost got us in trouble and we jumped in the car and left. Anyway I knew what I was doing all of the time.

DNR: Well, outside the camp then you could go outside and have a few beers or go roller skating?

Ray: If you came back to camp and you were drunk and they found out about it, they would give you KP or something like that. The next morning I was ok.

DNR: Roller skating and what else could the guys do if they wanted to go out?

Ray: Well, they didn't regulate what you do and you just signed out you go out and you could do about what you wanted to.

DNR: Well in the Army, you would go into town and there was be a USO club where you could go and have fun. There wasn't anything around the camp like that for the boys?

Ray: Not that I know of, I didn't do that stuff; anyway I stuck pretty close to camp.

DNR: What was there to do if you wanted to meet the girls besides roller skating?

Ray: When we would were over to Lamont, we would drive over to Strawberry Point and drive up and down the street, the same thing as they do now.

DNR: Was there many of the boys that belonged to organizations like the Masonic or any other type of organizations?

Ray: Not that I knew of.

DNR: Did the CCC's have a pretty good feeling about the community?

Ray: It was really what the community thought about the CCC's. What bothered me a little bit then was there VA was going on at the same time and they didn't consider that a job as much as they did a relief. Well, a lot of people considered the CCC camp that way too, but what they needed to understand was that was a way to keep guys out of prison and give them something to do. And give them an income. I thought our President did a real good job and they need the same thing now to keep these people from going to prison. If they had something to occupy their time then they wouldn't have to be in prison and we wouldn't have to keep feeding them. That was what I felt that was. A lot of people had a bad attitude about the CCC boys and camp. So a lot of times they were not very welcome.

DNR: Thinking about going into the CCC camp as a 16 year old and spending the majority of 3 years in a CCC camp, what your most memorable experience was in 3 years? You didn't get chased home by a girl or anything that really stood out?

Ray: I was a little bashful, but I wasn't that bashful. Well, I can't remember anything that I did that was that outstanding other than remembering the car wreck. And I would never forget that one and if I didn't hit the rock I was going to kill a bunch of people. Just routine things and when I had the car wreck the Captain even came to the hospital to see me. First day he came in he said how are you doing? And I said, "Pretty Good," the last day he came in he said some words that weren't very nice, "If I ever catch you even owning a car or driving one I am going to kick your ass." I still kept my car, but I parked it about a mile away and walked into camp, but I always had a car.

DNR: Did you have any odd or unusual experience working around that rock quarry you never found any rattlesnakes or anything like that?

Ray: No, but when I was in the quarry blasting it was something, but when I pulled that lever, I scattered. You always were out on the road and you have to be sure there was no traffic cause you were close to the road, see and make that turn and go down that hill cause that rock quarry was right there, cause cars were going were going in both directions. You had to be careful cause those rocks went everywhere.

DNR: But that blasting is that the most unusual experience that you can think of?

Ray: It was just routine like the jobs they have now a day as far as I can see, that was our job and they regulated what we did. We had to sign in and out when we left the camp. And if the Sergeant said you didn't go you didn't go, so to me it was just like the army except we didn't carry a gun but the job actually to me all that it amounted to was trying to keep guys off the streets, get us income and you knew where you were at and they wouldn't be getting into the trouble that they do now.

DNR: Other than drawing the salary and helping your parents out for those 3 years was there anything about the CCC camp that you felt was a special accomplishment on your part?

Ray: Oh, I actually had a chance to go out and meet the world, cause there was 200 guys or more.

DNR: So in other words you were going out to meet the world and learned how to live.

Ray: Right, you either got along with them or you got into trouble so you learned how to mix with other people. I had never been away from home so I never new what it would be like to be away from home and you had to learn to get along with the guys.

DNR: I am not sure if there is a very good question, because you pretty much covered it. Did the CCC make any changes in you life?

Ray: Well, I would say I grew up there.

DNR: These were tough times.

Ray: They were tough times, my folks didn't have anything else to live on if I didn't do that. It was a good experience because if you were never away from home, well my cousin lived about 3 miles and we got together, we were all about the same age, there was 3 or 4 of them. There were 3 on our side and 4 on theirs. But when you would go over there you had to learn how to get along with people, how to make your beds, how to work. Not the way you wanted it, but the way they wanted it done. I thought it was a good deal, I really did. Even when I got out I still thought it was a good deal because a lot of the guys would have been in prison and many of them are just running the streets. That is why there are so many guys in prison now because they don't have anything to do, so they just go out and get in trouble.

DNR: I guess your saying that the CCC camp was a pretty good way for a boy to change from a boy into a man?

Ray: That is exactly right. The main thing was getting acquainted with other people and learned to live with them and that is 24 hours a day.

DNR: And that was pretty important.

Ray: It sure was.

DNR: You bet.

DNR: Now after you left the CCC camp what did your career do since then?

Ray: I have done it all.

DNR: You done it all, I know you said you started working on a farm.

Ray: I worked on a farm and the guy had a bunch of dairy cows. He had a milk machine, but it would only run about half of the time. So I could milk a cow and a half by hand while he could only milk one with that milk machine, your talking 14 to 18 cows. I could get a bucket of milk not a half of a bucket. I could milk faster than that machine could. That was in 1939 and I quit that job and went to Keokuk and went to work as a smelter near the river. Worked there for 4 ½ years, until they tried to tell me what to do and I told them I didn't have too. Then I worked for the box factory in Keokuk after that.

DNR: I had read somewhere that at some CCC camps you were allowed to be married, but others if you were married they booted you out, did you know anything about that?

Ray: Well, not in the camps that we were in. LEMs were but that is all and they weren't CCC camp people, the got there own paycheck.

DNR: We have asked you a lot of questions and no doubt we've probably missed something you would like to say on behalf of the CCC's is there anything you would like to say?

Ray: I thought that the president did a good thing by starting that up. First of all the people that are even old enough to remember that don't know what hard times are like, we are going back to 29 and 30 and even farther back than that. So, what is going on now is too deep for me. But young people now might remember this now, if it is told. I am 84 years old.

DNR: You have got a little bit of time on me, not very much. But I always said I can remember when my mother would put patches on and then there would have to be patches on top of the patches.

Ray: Right. Wore bib overalls and sometimes would have to take the back off the leg and put it on the front, been through all of that. We had an old wash machine with a hand foot.

DNR: Well I don't know if this is a fair question or not, if they would start CCC camps today, would you think that would be a good system for the young people coming up?

Ray: As I said earlier, exactly there wouldn't be so many people in prison because there is too much spare time on their hands and they don't have anything to do. A bunch of them go downtown to and tear stuff up, just to have something to do. They wouldn't do that at camp. You would know where they were at and what they would be doing. So to me that would be a lot cheaper than what they are doing by sending them to prison and besides at that time they would have to get along. And in prison they fight in there just like they do outside. So to me prison is pretty far out unless they murder somebody, because they don't get better they get worse, they learn too much from the people that are already in there and so I said that for twenty years after WW II, right then the government made 2 big mistakes, they should have froze the price of everything right where it was at, right then.

DNR: Well you know one of the reasons we are giving our time to do this, we have seen a lot of things that the CCC boys did and we always thought they never quite got the credit for growing up in those two or three years after joining the CCC camp.

Ray: That was what I was telling you a while ago, that a lot of the people look down on them in other words they didn't want their daughters to go out with us guys.

DNR: When people say something like that, I would suggest they would go into Lake Wapello go in to that dinning room and have a hamburger and sit there and look at those light fixtures and all of those things that the boys made, things that no one would consider doing today that they did and it part of their history.

END ON INTERVIEW